



CT  
Against  
Gun  
Violence

March 8, 2023

Chairs Martha Marx and Patricia Dillon, Ranking Members Heather Somers and Martin Foncello and distinguished members of the Appropriations Health Subcommittee:

My name is Jonathan Perloe. I am the Communications Director for CT Against Gun Violence.

I am testifying in support of the \$2.5 million included in the Governor's budget on Line T1449 for the Department of Public Health to fund gun violence intervention grants in FY2024, and the \$400,000 on Line 274 for operational expenses each year in FY2024 and FY2025.

However, given the magnitude of the gun violence epidemic, especially in Connecticut's urban centers, the grant appropriation needs to be substantially larger, CT Against Gun Violence proposes at least \$10 million in each year of the fiscal 2024-25 budget.

I first got involved in the gun violence prevention movement after the Sandy Hook School shooting. When that happened, it became clear to me that unless ordinary citizens got involved, nothing would change and thousands more Americans would continue to be killed by guns each year. What I didn't realize then that I have come to learn since is that strong gun laws alone will not end gun violence in Connecticut. They are necessary, but not sufficient.

Especially when it comes to reducing community gun violence, we need to take a public health approach. We need to determine the risk factors that lead to violence, identify where the problem is, and develop interventions to keep it from spreading, while also building in protective factors to prevent the "disease" from recurring.

Governor Lamont and the legislature took an important step last year when they directed the Department of Public Health to establish a community gun violence intervention and prevention program, and to set up a Commission to advise DPH, in particular on developing grant-making criteria to allocate funds to on-the-ground violence reduction programs.

The governor's appropriation of \$2.5 million to fund intervention programs is a good start; but the legislature needs to do more. Using federal dollars from ARPA covers only FY2024. There is no grant money in the budget beyond that, which is indefensible. Community gun violence is a systemic issue that requires dedicated, ongoing funding, just as we fund other public health priorities year-in and year-out.

The legislature needs to make that \$10 million annual commitment now, so that DPH can plan accordingly.

Many reasons justify a higher, ongoing, level of grant funding:

- The funding should be commensurate with the problem. Connecticut gun homicides last year were at their highest level in 25 years; most of the killings occur in our largest cities.
- Community violence prevention and intervention programs are evidence-based solutions with proven results, often leading to [dramatic double digit percentage reductions](#) in shooting injuries and death.
- Not only will these programs save lives, they will reduce the taxpayer burden of gun

violence, which, overall, is estimated by [Everytown](#) and [Giffords Law Center](#) to cost Connecticut taxpayers between \$60 and \$90 million annually.

- The \$2.5 million appropriation is less than 1 percent of the combined FY2024 budget of DPH and the Dept. of Emergency Services and Public Protection, two agencies with the mission of keeping Connecticut safe.
- The state has ample resources, with a [projected](#) \$3 billion surplus this year (on top of \$4 billion last year), and a [proposed](#) \$440 million in tax breaks next year.

A \$10 million annual appropriation (approx \$2.80 per capita, \$82K per gun homicide) for grant funding is a reasonable amount compared to similar expenditures elsewhere:

- Massachusetts allocated \$48 million in 2022, a per capita expenditure of \$6.85, and a per gun homicide amount of \$262K, two and one-half to three times higher than our proposed \$10 million (*data from Giffords Law Center*).
- In Pennsylvania, Governor Shapiro has called for \$105 million for CVI funding, a per capita expenditure of \$8.20, also around three times higher than we propose (*data from CeaseFire PA*).
- The Coalition to Advance Public Safety, a consortium of organizations focused on violence prevention, created a CVI funding model for cities with high homicide rates. The [recommended](#) annual CVI expenditure for Hartford is \$4.7 million (not including wrap-around services), or \$260K per homicide, once again about three times higher than the \$10 million proposed by CAGV.

While it is difficult to make apples-to-apples spending comparisons across states, these three data points demonstrate that \$10 million in annual CVI grant spending as proposed is modest compared to what is being spent or proposed in these other jurisdictions.

Thank you for considering my testimony on investing appropriately to bring down the levels of gun violence that is disproportionately devastating lower-income Black and Hispanic communities in Connecticut.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Perloe  
Communications Director  
CT Against Gun Violence